

Review Article

Hypertextual Transformation (Novels "Franc Kafka Writes to His Son" and "The Kanun of Leka Junior")**Literature****Keywords:** Ridvan Dibra, hipertextuality, contemporary novel, postmodern, transformation, parody, etc.**Arjeta Ferlushkaj****University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi", University Library.****Abstract**

By studying the relationship between literary texts, the researcher Gérard Genette mentions transtextuality theory, which is a structural view of intertextuality. While, by definition, transtextuality is "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts." [1] Inside transtextuality, Genette distinguishes five categories: Intertextuality – A relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts; the actual presence of one text within another. Paratextuality – Marks those elements which lie on the threshold (the threshold consist of: a peritext and an epitext) of the text and which help to direct and control the reception of a text by its readers. Metatextuality – When a text takes up a relation of 'commentary' to another text: it unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it) in fact sometimes even without naming it. Hipertextuality – Any relationship uniting a text B (hypertext) to an earlier text A (hypotext) upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary. Architextuality – The entire set of general or transcendent categories- types of discourses, modes of enunciation, literary genres- from which emerges each singular text. [2] In our study, we are interested in the fourth category, hypertextuality. What Genette calls hypotext for other critics is intertext. Thus, textual practise of hypertextuality is considered an intentional intertextuality (Genette), as it is obtained through the technique of palimpsest. What makes palimpsest a postmodern feature is precisely the consciousness on it, because it is known that palimpsest has been applied earlier.

In the work "*Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*", Genette has built this table to reflect hypertextual practice¹:

	Mood	Playful	Satirical	Serious
Relation				
Transformation		Parody	Travesty	Transposition
Imitation		Pastiche	Caricature	Forgery

Table 1

In the relation between texts, Genette distinguishes *transformation*, as a simple and straightforward transformation of hypotext, and *imitation*, as a more complicated transformation but not direct to hypotext. Then, by function, Genette is of the opinion that there is not a cut line between playful and serious intent to use hypertextuality as a technique, and therefore has marked a dividing line in this way.

We will see next how the author Ridvan Dibra has used textual practice of hypertextuality to write his two works that we have taken under consideration.

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"*Franc Kafka Writes to His Son*" and "*The Kanun of Leka Junior*" are two novels that are written on the basis of two hypotexts: "*Letter to His Father*"² and "*The Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini*"³. These two hypotexts are not literary texts, but they have produced two literary works, further more novels, as a privileged genre in literature. Text resources (such as letters, kanun), except the common thing that are not literary texts, another common aspect is that these texts are unpublished in their time: the letter was published many years after it was written, while the Kanun (not codified in writing) has "lived" through the tradition to be collected and published several centuries later. The status of "handwriting" is a preferred feature of postmodern literature.

¹ Gérard Genette: *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, "University of Nebraska Press", USA, 1997, pg. 28.

² Franz Kafka: *Letter to His Father* "Phoenix", Tirana, 2000.

³ Father Shtjefen Gjeçov: *The Kanun of Lek Dukagjini*, "Franciscan Publishing", Shkodra, 2010.

The two novels have an important common key which is the authorial preface. In the novel *"Franc Kafka ..."*, this preface is entitled *"If"*, while in the other novel *"The Kanun of ..."* the preface is not named or specified but we take it as such by its function.

In the above categories of transtextuality, we mentioned paratextuality, the most important aspect of which is "to ensure for the text a destiny consistent with the author's purpose"⁴. The preface is an important paratextual component, which seeks to clarify the reader the reason and how the text lays out its goals and how this text should be read. Such elements, though seemingly unimportant, in fact they have a significant effect on the reader. For example, starting from the title, the reader gets prepared of what he is going to read but at the same time, while browsing, readers are surprised and have different expectations. This is a typical postmodern phenomenon: the poetics of paradox. Let's see the 'paths' that the author chose to show to his readers:

1. **"Franc Kafka Writes to His Son"**: *"If, as a child, I would not be so weak, sensitive, sick and suppressed (...) if after two failed engagements I would marry Felice (...) if She , along with everything else that a woman can give, she would give me a son (...) if all these would happen, I Franz Kafka, most likely, would write to my son ... "* (pg. 5-6)

2. **"The Kanun of Leka Junior"**: *"...I, Lekë Dukagjini, otherwise called Little Leka (to differentiate from the grandfather of my great-grandfather, carrying the same name), I decided to start the rewriting of the Law of Mountains (...) I state that those old-aged and rewritten laws, be applied even now in The Time of MouthEarNet (...) Why your Holy egobokas do not continue with the First Kanun? (...) The new occurrences need a New Kanun"* (pg. 5, 8)

Ridvan Dibra, in *"Franc Kafka"*, writes an hypothetical letter (conditional 'if') that transforms the text into a concrete literary text. The selected authorial game, where the boundaries between truth and fiction are merged, and state of limbo between the possible and the impossible, brings to the reader the pleasure of reading. The same pleasure of reading they get by browsing the "New Kanun", which is being written on April 1st (not by coincidence ...) and there is a Little Leka (against a Grand Leka), whom is adapting the old laws for a new era. Precisely this puts the text in a parody relationship with the hypotext, giving the reader a very special enjoyment in reading. However, we must emphasize that the reader should be acquainted with both hypotexts, in order to be able to understand any reference to the source text. Only in this way it could fulfill the authorial expectations cited in the introduction, which priorly requires an informed reader.

Referring to table 1, we can say that the two novels of Dibra are classified under the hypertextual relationship of transformation. So, by their relations with hypotexts, both novels are in the same category. Meanwhile, regarding the state (by the purpose and function), these two works are divided: *"Franc Kafka ..."*, as a work that does not intend to ridicule the subject taken by hypotext but is classified by the serious transformation- to transposition; and *"The Kanun of ..."* we think it is classified by the playful transformation, since the main purpose of the text is the irony and parodism to the text source:

	Mood	Playful	Serious
Relation			
Transformation		PARODY <i>"The Kanun of Leka Junior"</i>	TRANSPPOSITION <i>"Franc Kafka Writes to His Son"</i>
Imitation		-	-

Table 2

⁴ Graham Allen: *Intertextuality*, "Routledge", London-New York, 2000, pg.107.

As noted, we have not categorically separated these two states (separated by broken lines), because they also communicate with each other. Through the pages of these two novels we can trace passages or sentences that can display mockery of the source text and nostalgia in the sense of affirmation of origin.

According to Genette, the processes of transformation⁵ of the texts are several types: 1. Self-expurgation. 2. Excision. 3. Reduction. 4. Amplification.

In the novel *"The Kanun of Leka Junior"* we see that the author has used a little of the three divisions mentioned above: excision, reduction and amplification (less). The Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini begins with: *"The first book-The church"*. In the novel, this book is totally absent, and in the Kanun of *Little Leka*, family is the first and so begins: *"The first book-Family"*.

Until the tenth book there are no 'cuts' or reductions of the Kanun, except some articles (subchapters) which are removed, added or changed in chapters. In the tenth book it is completely cut off the chapter of 'Killer', which has 23 articles. Parts removed/reduced, which are not recontextualised in the "New Kanun" of course are well thought in relaying the targeted messages.

Regarding the amplification, it is noted little by little all over the novel, and it mostly interferes in sentence level, as eg. cases of sentences below the naming of each article. We can cite a few cases:

1-*"Determining the manner of marriage"*. ("A man out of wedlock is not called a man.")⁶ (pg. 17) (*"Përcaktimi e mëndyrët e Martesës. ("Robi jashtë martesë nuk thirret njeri."*)

2- *Co-parents-in-law are co-parents-in-law, friends are friends.* ("Co-parents-in-law do not come with the hands in the pockets") (pg. 29) (*Krushku-krushk, Miku-mik. ("Krushqit nuk vijnë me duer nder xhepa")*)

3- *Allotment of properties.* ("The property brings joy and trouble.") (pg. 54) (*Caktimi i pronave. ("Prona bjen shend e sherr."*)

4- *The Mow-man.* ("The mow-man has permission to sleep with anyone's wife.") (pg. 68) (*Mullisi. ("Mullisi ka tagër me flet me gruen e huej."*)

5- *Swearing by not knowing.* ("You knew-you didn't knew: honour lies in a thread.") (pg. 88) (*Beja me 'Sedije'. ("E dije-Sedije: ndera mbi një fije."*)

6- *Authority for the duties of Elders.* ("If you are old, you are brain old not year old.") (pg. 111) (*Tagri e detyrat e Pleqve. ("Plak të bajn mendët e jo vjetët."*)

7- *Voice of ordinary people.* ("Ordinary people have weak voice.") (pg. 122) (*Zani i Vogjlis. ("Vogjlia e ka zanin e marrun."*)

Another example is when the articles are cited equally by the Kanun but it is added any sentence to deform its content to give the effect of entertainment and gibe (irony-parody to the moral decay of society)⁷:
"482. If someone betrays a friend, the Kanun of Leka Junior gives him three ways out: a. to be killed b. to be ashamed c. to forget."

484. With the Old Kanun, the court would take-out with violence the unfaithful person and he would never enter the Assembly of Men; instead the Kanun of Leka Junior- since unfaithful persons are spreading-out - he has been declared more gentle.

⁵ We consider in this paper only the inner transformation of the text, and have omitted our attention to the issues of genres.

⁶ The first sentence is the corresponding article in the Kanun. Sentences in parentheses are copyright of the author Dibra.

⁷ Author's interventions we have formally differentiated by underlining.

Note: With the Kanun of Leka Junior, a friend-betrayer, if he is called a man, he will suffer his betray by himself, with his mind and soul.⁸

This type of expansion has one goal: to transform the discourse from serious to parody. In the *book* 'Marriage', the fifth article, after it gives the duties of the husband due to his wife and vice versa (as they are cited in the Kanun), in the novel it also adds this ironic trend between same-sex relationships:

"17. The duties of man to man

A man is in charge:

- a. To take care for clothes and anything else the man asks for.*
- b. To protect the honor of the man when he forgets to keep it by himself.*
- c. To fulfill all his needs, especially the body needs."⁹*

Quantitatively, hypertext and hypotext do not have obvious differences. So, it is not that the author has greatly reduced the hypotext, he only has parodied the discourse. Something else happens with the novel *"Franc Kafka Writes to His Son"*, where it predominates the authors' extension due to hypotext.

Talking about the amplification process, Genette differentiates another dimension that he calls it *transmotivation*¹⁰. Thus, for the novel *"Franc Kafka..."* Ridvan Dibra chose the hypertextual practice of transformation and what happens exactly in it is the process of *transmotivation*. According to Genette, with the term *transmotivation* we understand the process of semantic transformation which stands somewhere between motivation and demotivation, against hypotext. Through *transmotivation*, hypertext (the novel) gives us motives and characters that hypotext does not have (letters) and thus a text is obtained, which has expectations and goals profoundly different from the source text.

Motivation of the hypotext is the unbearable oppression of father to son, fear and almost hate for his father. We illustrate:

"... If I'm trying to answer you by writing a letter, this will be a very insignificant answer, because even when I write, I feel gripped by the fear that you have caused me and its consequences (...) all my thoughts are submitted under your breath-taking oppression, also those that differed from yours, especially them. All ideas, seemingly liberated from your hooves were always tainted by your negative judgment."¹¹

Meanwhile, motivation to hypertext is something else: instead of oppression, is the father being proud of his son; boundless love and motivation for self-esteem etc:

"... everything of yours-even a random question-gives me love ... (...) and even when I write I feel overwhelmed by the love that you have raised in me and its consequences (...) ... the important thing is that I

⁸ Ridvan Dibra: *The Kanun of Leka Junior*, "Buzuku", Pristina, 2011, pg. 94-95.

⁹ Ibid. pg. 20.

¹⁰ Graham Allen: *Intertextuality*, "Routledge", London-New York, 2000, pg.110.

¹¹ Franz Kafka: *Letter to His Father*, "Phoenix", Tirana, 2000, pg. 9 and 17.

feel more than proud of you and I consider you not simply as a part of me, but as my overfulfillment, in all views."¹²

From the undeclared war father to son in the hypotext, we pass to the silence of love of father to son in hypertext:

Hypotext: *"While you with your insults killed without sparing anybody; the man in front of you felt himself completely vulnerable."*¹³

Hypertext: *"It happened, although rarely, when you talked to me words that you did not think or take under consideration (...) Yet, I do not deny, with my forced silence, I pretended I had never heard or understood things, sparing you from any backlash or offending reaction; so, in front of me you felt completely protected."*¹⁴

Even in terms of characters, there are differences: if in hypotext the son is the one that writes the letter, in hypertext the father is the writer; if in hypotext Felice is an image character, in hypertext is a catalyst character etc.

In the table below we will see how the author has raised the relationships with his hypotexts, what he has changed and where he is mostly focused to obtain the relevant hypertexts:

"Franc Kafka Writes to His Son"		"The Kanun of Leka Junior"	
Hypotext (the letter)	Hypertext (the novel)	Hypotext (the kanun)	Hypertext (the novel)
The writer of the letter – the son	The writer of the letter – the father	The writer of Kanun-Leka	The writer of Kanun-successor of Leka
Need for a better relationship	Need for keeping this relationship	Establishment of rules (organisation)	Mockery of rules (chaos)
Pressure from father	Pride for the son	The mountains' law	The laws of Egoboka
Letter from 1919 (published 1953)	Letter from 2006	The Kanun from XVth century (published XIXth century)	The Kanun from XXIth century

Table 3

In the form of conclusion, we can say that we are dealing with two "rewritings" that are typologically the same (hypertexts of palimpsest) but which have different models, especially different purposes. In the novel *"Franc Kafka Writes to His Son"*, we think that it is precisely transmotivation what has transformed the discourse, especially the *authorial extension*. "Authorial extension dominates the novel so we can say that the boundary between them becomes hardly recognizable in most of the work. This marks the culmination point of creative power to hypotext, as it seems like the hypotextual tracks are 'deleted' because the new creation comes to the reader esthetically accomplished."¹⁵ While, in *"The Kanun of Leka Junior"*, generally we have almost the same legal articles as the old Kanun and transformation in here is mostly noted in the discourse. This work, which by experimenting in this form dares and risks not little, is an indisputable evidence of talent, sharpness of mind and the creative originality of Ridvan Dibra, which aims to educate by rallying.

Both novels are a serious contribution to contemporary Albanian literature and are qualitatively enriching the postmodern one.

¹² Ridvan Dibra: *Franc Kafka Writes to His Son*, "Toena", Tirana, 2006, pg. 10 and 16.

¹³ Franz Kafka: *Letter to His Father*, "Phoenix", Tirana, 2000, pg. 19.

¹⁴ Ridvan Dibra: *Franc Kafka Writes to His Son*, "Toena", Tirana, 2006, pg. 26.

¹⁵ Arjeta Ferluskaj: *Mirrors of postmodernism. Elements of postmodern poetry in the novels of Ridvan Dibra*. "Onufri", Tirana, 2012, pg. 82.

Conclusion

In five category of transtextuality, hipertextuality is any relationship uniting a text B (hypertext) to a earlier text A (hypotext) upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary. Precisely, this kind of relationship is treated in this paper, which is differently recognized as intentionally intertextuality (Genette). Hypertext is obtained through the technique of palimpsest. This is the technique used in the two novels that we have considered.

In this paper, our focus is to point out how the author Ridvan Dibra used the textual practice of hypertextuality to write two of his works: “*Franc Kafka Writes to His Son*” and “*The Kanun of Leka Junior*”. Our goal is to show that, despite our classification of both works to the hypertextual relationship of transformation, they still differ from one another by function/purpose: one conceived as nostalgia origin (the letter of Kafka), and the other as a parody of origin (the Kanun of Leka). Also, the aim of this study is to confirm the postmodern character of the works of Ridvan Dibra, works which merit greater attention since they contribute to the enriching quality of Albanian contemporary novel.

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